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ADDRESS BY

Right Honourable SIR AUCKLAND
GEDDES, K.C.B.

BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES

at the

Fifth Annual Meeting

of the

Canadian Bar Association

Ottawa, September 2nd, 1920



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BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES

OTTAWA, SEPTEMBER 2ND, 1920

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellency, My Lord, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I do not think it would be easy for me to find words to express my deep appreciation of the kindness which you have just done me. I am glad to be here among you. I regard this opportunity of speaking to you as a rare and a real privilege; for to one placed as I am, watching from day to day the doings of the nations of the world, there is one great phenomenon which is of outstanding interest and, as I believe, of vast importance. It is a problem which is discussed wherever men meet together — the problem which we shortly summarize under the two words, "World Unrest."

I hear many opinions expressed as to the cause of this great questioning which has seized upon the mind of humanity. I hear it ascribed to the workings of some widespread conspiracy in the international underworld. I do not think that that gives us any real explanation. We may take it as proved that there are agitators, that there are individuals who are spending their time in trying to stir up trouble. There is no doubt that such individuals do harm. There is no doubt that such individuals add to the unrest which exists. But they always seem to me more like mosquitoes, carriers of fever, whom it is of very little use to regard as the causes of the disease; and although there is a human pleasure to be got from "swatting" the mosquito, you won't get rid of him until the slimy pools are drained and the places from which he draws his poison are cleaned.

I hear other people say world unrest is to be regarded as the aftermath of war. Some people love a phrase like that. I agree most fully that the war has created disturbances, has produced conditions in the life of all the nations that were engaged in it, and of those that were not, which have added to the discomfort and therefore to the dissatisfaction of many men and many women. Some of those who say that the unrest is to be regarded as the aftermath of war point especially to economic conditions, and satisfy themselves that they have found therein a complete and adequate explanation.

A Scotch friend of mine, after having surveyed at considerable length the world unrest which he saw, said to me: "I believe we'd be rid o' this trouble if people would only realize that money was a metaph-ee-sical obstruction and not a reality." But, although he had seized upon a profound truth, it does not seem to me to be an adequate explanation of the symptoms which we can find in every nation of the world.

There are indeed economic conditions adding to the world trouble. The mere change in the distribution of gold, the dispersion of the European gold hoards, the concentration of great sums in gold in the United States of America, has produced an altered condition throughout the world which alone would explain something of the economic difficulties by which we are faced. Add to that the loss of markets which formerly existed in countries that are now destroyed, from the point of view of economic power; such countries as Russia and Germany; and you have again an influence which certainly adds to the unrest in the world. And we have too in many parts of the world a shattering of the financial machinery, necessary to the exchange of products. All these things add to the difficulties; I do not believe they are their cause.

Others who ascribe all unrest to the war seek to place the explanation upon psychological causes. Millions of people, they say, had the orderly habits of their lives broken by the war, and cannot be expected to return easily to their old pursuits. Very true, but again not an adequate explanation of the phenomenon. Others say that men's minds have become accustomed to violence and slaughter. They have seen that objects can be gained by force, and they believe that force is the most effective way of attaining any object which they have set their hearts upon. Very true, but, again, I believe, not an adequate explanation. For, if we cast our minds back to the early months of 1914, and to the years before, we find that even then there was a world unrest. I believe that the war was a product of existing world unrest rather than the cause; for the war, if you cast back your memories, will appear as the climax of a period in which the relations between the nations were growing more difficult, and you will find also associated with that period of international unrest a period of unrest within the countries. Great Britain experienced more colossal strikes in the years before the war than she experienced during it or since. I have no doubt that in this problem of world unrest we are dealing with something that is situated deep in the very heart of the life of modern nations.

It springs mainly, I believe, in so far as it is in existence within such a nation as the British nation, directly from the results and the effects of the industrial revolution. For, indeed, when you

analyze this problem of world unrest you will find that there is more than world unrest; you will find that there is the social unrest within the life, within the population, of the industrialized nations, and you will find that there is, in the case of the British Empire, an unrest which is geographical. I should like for a few moments, because these matters seem to me to be of great importance with regard to the steering of the ship of state in the future, to consider, first, that unrest which is in the body politic, of England, and then glance for a few moments at that other form of unrest which I have referred to as geographical.

I do not know that I have anything very new or very original to say, but perhaps even if you have heard these points before, you will forgive me if I refer to them again.

During the period of the war it was my lot to conduct the recruiting of England, Scotland and Wales. I was brought thereby into very close and intimate contact with the lives of millions; and I found there in the great industrial cities, a condition of affairs which to me was quite unexpected. I found physical ill-being present to an extent and on a scale that I think no one imagined to be possible. I found more; I found disorganized families; I found men living always away from their home, moving as trade moved; and I found men whose minds were absolutely warped by their daily occupation. I can imagine nothing more serious in its effects upon the human mind than the sort of life that many of these men engaged in industrial England have to lead—and the same is true of the men of any nation engaged in similar pursuits. I found men there who were machine menders, whose daily task it was, to look after some automatic machine or group of automatic machines, whose minds were continually starved of the exercise of that first and most important function of the human mind, the function of creating something; for they had nothing to do but to watch and to allow their minds to stagnate. After years of that life you find a man either in bitter revolt against he knows not what, or else you find him practically catatonic and almost mindless. What is his greatest ambition? To get drunk on Saturday and to stay drunk until Monday or Tuesday, so that he cannot think of the life that he is leading.

I found something more; I found men who through prudence, because of the nature of their employment and the uncertainty of their future, had not married, living among strangers, in uncomfortable lodgings, not one knowing whence they came or whether they went, not caring who they were. I found women in the same condition of mental unhappiness. And I would say this, that you cannot have hundreds of thousands of adults living under conditions which make it impossible for them to marry and to bring up children in decency, and not have unrest; for the dearest, the deepest, the strongest instinct of

mankind is the instinct of parenthood, and if you have hundreds of thousands of adults without children you have ringing in their ears, inaudible to others but audible to them, the voices of the children that never will be born, saying to them:—"If we were born you would have some interest in the future. If we were born, in your old age we would be there to comfort you and work for you." And that causes unrest, the profound unrest that is eating out the heart of many of the men and women in the industrialized nations of the world.

But not only are the unborn children the agitators in this world unrest, so also the children that have been born and that have been slain by the slums. Their voices speak across the grave. They, too, are agitators. That is one of the products of the industrial revolution which transformed the nations of Europe from being predominantly agricultural to being predominantly industrial. It is one of the by-products that will follow in every country, that is industrialized, whose experience is at one time great prosperity and then a period of commercial depression; for the uncertainty, the need of gaining markets against keen competitors, make the establishment of homes, and the rearing of healthy families difficult for all, impossible for the less skilled. Before the war, that was the condition in the industrialized countries of Europe, and I do not doubt that something of the same conditions exist on this continent, although here the wide open fields provided outlets in the great North West quarter for men who had it in them to go and serve in its development. Your conditions were not so difficult. But the world unrest, I believe, is the by-product of the industrial revolution which gave the power and the wealth to the industrialized democracies. And it is there that I look for the heart of the unrest that we have to meet today, the heart of that unrest which is proper to the nation, which exists within the limits of the nation.

And not unconnected with it is that other unrest which I described as geographical. It was the wealth and the power acquired by the nations which were becoming industrialized that made it possible for them to assume control over lands far outside their borders. In some cases within those lands the indigenous population had no experience of European diseases or of European civilization, and they melted before the contact of the Europeans as the snow melts in the spring, and the people of Europe, streaming out, were able to occupy those lands, and form great dominions within them. But there were other lands where the population did not vanish before the diseases of Europe, where the population had had as long an experience, aye, and far longer an experience of civilization even than the Europeans themselves, where it existed and prospered, after the coming of the Europeans. And if you look back over the history

of the past as far as it is known to us, you will see that those countries in which the populations continued and prospered were connected by land with Europe and as a matter of history, so far as we know had never had experience of democratic government. Asia, throughout the millenniums of its existence, had had theocratic governments, governments in which the sovereign, the emperor or the king, the conqueror, spoke with absolute authority, because his voice was God's voice and he was but the lieutenant of God on earth. And into that position, into the seats of these God-inspired rulers passed some human symbol of the power of a western democracy, and at once the questioning, active mind of Asia saw the change—realized that this ruler that they had now was different from the rulers that they had had, and they learned that the theory which the western nation followed—that these men sent to them as governors received their authority from the people and not from God direct.

Here you have, in this clash of two ideas of government as it works and ferments, grows and develops, the cause of the great geographical unrest as I see that cause at the present time. Add to these causes all the effects of the war, that I have already spoken of. Add to them the effect of all the agitators in the world. At the bottom, however, the unrest that we have to meet centres upon, has its origin in, and is a product of, the industrialization of the nations. Tackling that problem, finding the solution for the difficulties which are associated with it, is a work for many patient years. If we are to find the solution successfully, we nations which are of European stocks must declare among ourselves a peace of the Europeans in order that we may solve the difficulties which must be solved if the civilization that we have known is to continue through the centuries without collapse; for you cannot have a civilization continuing which is questioned, challenged and, if possible, destroyed by its own children from its own very heart. Before we can deal with these problems which are thronging towards us, I believe it absolutely essential that we should have an arrangement among the nations which will secure for them international peace and allow the thought of statesmen and the time of statesmen to be concentrated upon these internal problems.

And the very foundation of that friendship between the nations, I believe, must be, if the friendship is to endure, the development of a close sympathy, of real mutual respect and understanding between all the British nations and that other great English-speaking nation, the United States of America. On the basis of such a friendship the peace of the Europeans can be established. I doubt if for many years it could exist on any other foundation. And you, Canada, by the accident of your position, by community of interest, by knowledge and by innumerable friendships are especially placed to help to

build the golden bridge of sympathy between the British nations and the United States. To you is given the privilege of constructing the bridge which will cross the chasms of ignorance and the abyss of misrepresentation by which some might seek, by which some have sought, to create misunderstanding between these peoples. If you succeed, if we succeed, in building and establishing that bridge between the peoples, then we shall have taken the first essential step on the pathway which leads to that world of our dreams, a world of peace and justice. With that step taken we can face the future confident that we shall have time, if we set our minds to it and do not fall into bickering by the wayside, to deal with the problems which must be dealt with before the world returns to the spirit of peace. But if we were to fail, if by any awful mischance troubles were to arise between the English-speaking peoples, then he would be a brave and foolhardy man who looked for any peace in the future. I do not believe civilization would long exist if there were strife between them.

The responsibility upon us all is great, but the responsibility and the opportunity which you, Canada, have is enormous — glorious, and I believe that you are the people who will take that chance and who will build the bridge which we must cross to safety and prosperity in the future.

